

mail passes us but once a week, I must of course postpone all Ideas of forwarding this for some days to come. So I Shall now take myself to Business and for the present bid you Good Morning.

ALS, Chamberlain Collection, MB. Place from which written not specified. The concluding portion of this letter was written on 5 May and is printed under that date.

<sup>1</sup> A reference to Genesis 8:8-11.

### Richard Bland Lee to Leven Powell

I received yesterday your letter of the 18th. Instant from Middleburg. we have at present a very full house. And this day Genl. Washington takes his oath of office in the presence of both houses. who afterwards will accompany him to divine service to implore the blessing of heaven on our government.

The inclosed report will shew you what are our ideas with regard to an impost. That part of it which relates to duties only has been amended and adopted and a Bill ordered in in conformity thereto. The Part relating to tonnage will be considered tomorrow—and if any alteration is made in it, it will be to lessen the duty on vessels belonging to the subjects of powers not in alliance with us. I doubt whether any alteration will take place.

We have not had time to take up the project of amendments—there is little danger of these being extended farther than prudence and propriety require. With regard to the permanent seat of congress that question has been prudently waved at present it being of such a nature as to rouse into action local prejudices and predilections—I flatter myself that it will be delayed till the close of our first Session. I confess that I feel great apprehensions that an improper decision will take place on this occasion—tho' much may be expected from the liberality which has hitherto been displayed by the members particularly from the Eastward. we must act with caution and play our cards with skill.

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ALS, Powell Papers, DLC. Addressed to Middleburg, Loudoun County, Virginia. In part of the omitted text, which discusses Virginia politics, Lee asked Powell to share the letter's news with friends, since "I have not time to write to more than one person at a time in a county."

### Comte de Moustier, Description of the Inauguration

The day of 30th April 1789 is remarkable for the most solemn and the most imposing ceremony that has so far taken place in the United States. The Senate and the House of Representatives have designated this day for

the reception of the head of this vast republic who under the modest title of President enjoys several royal prerogatives. Washington the only man who merits filling this eminent position has been unanimously elected by a populace whose gratitude is commensurate with the virtues of their former General.

\*\*\* The Congress had named two committees and seven masters of ceremony to make the necessary arrangements and to organize the Presidential procession. At noon the two Houses met at the Senate chamber which is to be the site for the reception of the head of the Republic. The Representatives entered in procession, led by their Speaker, and followed by their clerks and other employees. They were received by the Vice President of the United States and the Senators who all rose. The latter filled the places to the right of the President's seat, and the Representatives arranged themselves to the left.

The two committees were then conducted by carriage to the President's residence; they were led by several corps of militia, both on foot and on horseback. After having informed the President that the Congress was ready to receive him, they formed the following procession. \*\*\*

The Procession passed through the main thoroughfares to the street opposite the "palais" of Congress. The troops fell into review formation and everyone descended and progressed slowly into the "palais." The President, hat in hand, bowed to the public to his left and right and though there was an innumerable throng all the people removed their hats, and observed a respectful silence. Upon his entrance to the Senate chamber the Vice President and all the members rose to receive him and the Vice President led him to his designated seat. Once everyone was seated the Vice President rose to announce to the President that the members of the two houses were ready to join him in bearing witness to the oath he was going to take in conformity with the constitution. A balcony abutting the Senate chamber had been designated for this purpose in order that all manner of people be able to witness the event in the greatest possible number. Three doors leading to this balcony were opened: the President went through the middle door, followed by the Vice President and the Chancellor of the State of New York [*Robert R. Livingston*] to whom the oath would be sworn. Senators went out through the door on the right and Representatives through that on the left. A bible was brought out on a crimson pillow on which the President placed his hand and pronounced after the Chancellor the following words: "I solemnly swear to faithfully uphold the duties of the President of the United States and to do all that is in my power to preserve, protect and defend the constitution of the United States." Whereupon the Chancellor, making a sign to the crowd with his hat, cried "*Long live George Washington, President of the United States.*" Three *burrabs*, the standard acclamation of the people, followed, the

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President bowed deeply to the people and after having received a second acclamation he went back in with the Senators and Representatives.

The most zealous federalists had proposed seizing this moment to give their idol a title that would approximate him more closely to a true sovereign. *Serene Highness* seemed the most suitable to them. The enthusiasm of the masses was pushed to the point that they could even have been made to approve *Majesty*. But it is feared that this would displease the very man who is the object of it, and that it would weaken the foundation of a government, which is based only on trust. Moreover, the people of New York do not have the right like those of Rome to decide the lot of the Republic. The other parts of the confederation have protested against this abuse which the first effervescence of federalist zeal would render excusable but which without a general consensus should have no continued existence. A German businessman named [George] Scriba had raised at his own expense a corps that would serve as guards to the President. This project had no more success than the first. The republican zealots found something too monarchical in it and they insisted that the best guard for the President was in the affection of the people.

The President took his seat once again and, having given the members of both houses leave to take theirs, he rose to pronounce a very moving address on the current state of events and on his personal situation. He painted in the most vivid colors, and with the air of dignity and candor that only he possesses, that "the anxiety that he suffered in obeying the call of his country, which he has only ever heard with veneration, alone could recall him from the retirement in which he had chosen to end his days. That well-aware of his insufficient talents and his lack of experience in civil administration, he hoped that his fellow citizens would judge him with the same favor that they evinced in raising him to the eminent office that he had the honor to fill. That in the first act of authority entrusted to him it was his duty to give evidence of his gratitude toward the Supreme Being whose intervention has been so evident in the two revolutions that his country has undergone and that, above all, in this last instance, the voluntary consent of so many different communities to the form of government that had been proposed to them, was a special proof of divine protection. That though the constitution gave him the right to recommend the measures to the two Houses that seem necessary and advantageous to him, he believes that he ought not at this beginning stage avail himself of this prerogative, that he ought rather to remind them of the various functions prescribed to them by this great Constitutional Charter, and leave discussion of the particulars to their wisdom, their zeal and patriotism. That it is much more suitable to his present situation and to this sentiment to pay homage to the talents and virtues that the suffrage of their fellow citizens has accorded them. That he was convinced that no personal view, no local prejudice, no party spirit, would dazzle the

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eyes chosen to watch over the success of so many different operations; and that order and patriotism were so much the more indispensable to the preservation of these varied interests; that the preservation of the sacred flame of liberty and the destiny of a truly republican government today depend on the trial put to the American people. That what little information he had been able to gather on the desired amendments to the Constitution would not permit him to make any recommendation in this regard: but that he confides this entirely to the judgment and good intentions of the two houses; that he hoped that in protecting public liberty, they also bear in mind the harmony between the different members of the Confederation." After having touched these essential points the President addressed himself to the Representatives in particular to tell them that whatever might be the monetary compensation that they deem appropriate for the person charged with executive power, he wanted to be exempted from it, and that he beseeched them to limit it to the actual expenses necessitated by the public good.

The memory of the former services of this great man, his current exaltation, his modesty, all this helps lend greater influence to his words. The procession left the room to go to St. Paul's Church where the Anglican Bishop who is Senate Chaplain [*Samuel Provost*] recited prayers appropriate to the ceremony. The President returned to his residence in this same procession.

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*DHFFC* translation of a copy in *Correspondance Politique, Etats-unis*, 34:71-78, Fr. This article, written for *La Gazette de France et La Journal Politique*, an officially sponsored newspaper, was enclosed with Comte de Moustier to Comte de Montmorin, 5 June, *Correspondance Politique, Etats-unis*, 34:158-71. The omitted text discusses Washington's virtues, his life following the Revolutionary War, and the order of the procession that escorted him to Federal Hall.

### William Vans to Benjamin Goodhue

Altho' I have not had the pleasure of a Letter from you, but finding by your Letter to Mr. [*Richard*] Ward you were so obliging as not to forget me (for which I thank you) I therefore take the liberty of troubling you at this time.

The conversation of the day seems chiefly to be taken up with the doings of Congress, especially with respect to the Impost Act now under their consideration—The wish of everyone seems to be that duties be laid, & some will say heavy ones, but mankind are so tenacious of their own Int[erest]s. that each one saies don't let them bear hard on me, and so unwilling are they to pay taxes of any kind when they only imagine they bear hard on them,